



New Jersey

Agricultural Management Assistance Program



The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program is a voluntary program for eligible agricultural producers in fifteen states. AMA targets three specific concerns: water management, tree planting, and risk management through production diversification and resource conservation practices. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) professionals work with producers to develop a conservation plan, design conservation practices, and provide guidance to help implement the plan.

AMA is available only to agricultural producers who qualify for farmland assessment. Since 2000, NJ has funded over \$1.7 million in AMA conservation projects. The NJ program specifically targets limited resource farmers, small farms, and producers who have had limited participation in other cost-share programs. However, most producers can qualify to apply based on the five criteria listed below.

What are the Applicant Qualifications?

Applicants must own or control the land, agree to implement specific eligible conservation practices, and qualify for farmland assessment. Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Average annual gross farm sales are \$60,000 or less over the last three years
2. Total gross household income is \$41,416 or less
3. Farmed land (owned and rented cropland and pasture) is a total of less than:
 - 50 acres - when income from fruit, vegetable or specialty crops is >50% of total farm production income OR
 - 200 acres (for all others)
4. Total USDA program payments received over the past 5 years are less than \$10,000
5. Farm production income is 75% or more of total gross household income

How are Applicants Ranked?

Applicants are ranked by priority designations, as follows:

- Priority 1 - meets all 5 of the qualifications
- Priority 2 - meets 4 of the qualifications.
- Priority 3 - meets 3 of the qualifications.
- Priority 4 - meets 2 of the qualifications.
- Priority 5 - meets 1 of the qualifications.

Additional subcategories are used if needed to rank applications. The subcategories are based on the environmental risk factors of the applicant land area, and not the operation.

How Does Signup for AMA Work?

Producers can sign up for AMA at any time. In addition to the basic application form, all applicants are required to complete a "self-assessment" workbook in order to determine their qualifications and need for the specific conservation practices offered by the program. The workbook details additional information specific to each conservation practice including cost share rates provided.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

What are the Payment Rates and Terms?

Cost share practices are reimbursed using one of three methods. Most conservation practices that involve operator management of a conservation system are cost-shared using a Flat Rate (FR). Flat rate management practices are reimbursed at 100% of a pre-determined amount for a maximum period of five years. Structural practices that have one-time installation costs are cost-shared using the Average Cost (AC) method. These practices are reimbursed at a rate of 75% of the annually determined average cost, regardless of actual cost. A few practices are cost-shared under the Actual Cost not-to-exceed a Maximum (AM) method, which limits the total reimbursement to a maximum dollar amount, based on the actual bills.

An AMA Cost Schedule is used to determine payment rates. The current cost schedule is available at the New Jersey NRCS website at www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama.

What Practices Can Receive Cost Sharing Funding?

The conservation provisions of this program authorize payments to producers under three program areas:

1. To construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures

Eligible practices:

- High Efficiency Irrigation Systems (AC) – Permanently installed upgrades to existing systems, or new systems that will be 80% efficient upon completion. Irrigation water management is required.
- Rehabilitation of irrigation pond dams (AM) – For dam rehabilitation projects, a dam must be listed on the state's dam registry, and have a recent dam safety report indicating the deficiencies and required repairs to meet the NJ dam safety requirements, certified by a NJ licensed engineer.

Note: NRCS engineering assistance is not provided on any irrigation or dam rehabilitation project; all engineering will be provided by the landowner at his/her own expense. Cost share is limited to actual construction costs.

2. To plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality

Eligible practices:

- Riparian Forest Buffer (AC)
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover (AC)
- Streambank and Shoreline Protection (AC)
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (AC)

3. To mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming

Eligible practices:

- **Cropland Practices:** Cover Crop (FR), Contour Buffer Strips (AC), Critical Area Planting (AC), Field Border (AC), Filter Strip (AC), Grassed Waterway (AC), Herbaceous Wind Barriers (AC), Mulching (AC), Residue Management (FR), No Till/Strip Till (FR), Irrigation Water Management (FR), Nutrient Management (FR), Pest Management (FR), Vegetative Barrier (AC), Conservation Cover (AC)
- **Grazing Lands Practices:** Fence (AC), Prescribed Grazing (FR), Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment (FR), Pasture and Hayland Planting (AC), Stream Crossing (AC), Use Exclusion (AC), Watering Facility (AC), Water Well (AC), Heavy Use Area Protection (in pasture) (AC)

What is the Contract Period for AMA?

Once an application is selected for funding, a conservation plan is developed with the help of NRCS. A contract detailing the practices, payment rates, schedule for implementation, and operation and maintenance requirements must be signed by all parties before work can begin. Contracts are for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 10 years. Practices must be maintained for the official life span of the practice, regardless of the length of the contract.

For more information, contact your NRCS Service Center

Freehold – (732) 462-0075
Serving Mercer, Middlesex & Monmouth

Frenchtown – (908) 782-4614
Serving Hunterdon, Somerset & Union

Hackettstown – (908) 852-2576
Serving Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic,
Morris, Sussex & Warren

Hainesport – (609) 267-0811
Serving Burlington, Camden & Ocean

Vineland – (856) 205-1225
Serving Atlantic, Cape May & Cumberland

Woodstown – (856) 769-1126
Serving Gloucester & Salem